

Bible Stories for Adults

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5 - 7

Opening

Gathering: How do we recognize righteousness in others?

Today's Focus: Jesus taught on a hillside about true righteousness in the kingdom of God.

Key Verses: *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Matthew 5:48

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Jesus and His Disciples (*Luke 6:1-12*)

How popular did Jesus become during His first year of public ministry?

Matthew 4:23-25 = Large crowds came from all over to see and follow Him

Did He have any opposition this early in His ministry, or did that come later?

Luke 6:2, 9-11 = Strict Jews opposed Him for disobeying their Sabbath traditions

How did Jesus respond to His call to minister to the crowds in spite of ignorant opposition?

Luke 6:12 = He spoke with His Father

Jesus and His Apostles (*Luke 6:13-16*)

Why did Jesus spend all night in prayer at this point?

Luke 6:13 (13-16) = He chose and called Twelve to be His select apostles

Why did He call them apostles (Greek for *one sent forth*)?

Luke 9:1-2 (Acts 1:8) = They'd especially go out as His witnesses with His message & power

Were these Twelve the only ones Jesus sent out with His message and power?

Luke 10:1, 17 = No, He also sent out 72 other disciples – Jesus had many disciples (students)

The Rest of the Day (*Luke 6:17-19*)

What did Jesus do with His disciples after selecting Twelve of them to be His apostles?

Luke 6:17-19 = He walked down the mountain to a level place to minister to the crowds

After a night without sleep, how was Jesus able to minister to the crowds?

Matthew 5:1 = He moved to a higher point (from the plateau) and sat down

Did He sit down because He was tired and overwhelmed by the crowds?

Matthew 5:2 = No, He was energized by His night with the Father, Sat as a rabbi to teach

Understanding God's Kingdom (*Luke 4:43*)

What did Jesus need to teach His apostles, His disciples and the crowds?

Luke 4:43 = The message that He was sent to teach – the good news of God's kingdom

After millennia of God revealing His kingdom to the Jews, why did Jesus need to teach about it?

Matthew 19:16, 20-22, 25-26 = They didn't understand and needed Jesus' new revelation

Why didn't the Jewish leaders and teachers help them understand?

Matthew 23:1-4, 13 = They were part of the problem; they had confused God's truth

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Models of Meeting God's Standards (*Matthew 5:20, 48*)

- Who did the Jews consider to be shining examples of how to live to enter God's kingdom?
Luke 18:11-12 = Pharisees who focused heavily on obeying the law
- How did Jesus point out that they are inappropriate models?
Matthew 5:20 = Their righteousness wasn't enough to enter God's kingdom
- Then who should people look to as a model for what is needed to enter God's kingdom?
Matthew 5:48 = God's perfection is required
- The Pharisees appeared to be examples of righteousness. How could they fall short of God's kingdom?
Mark 7:5, 14-15, 21-23 = Righteousness is a matter of the heart

The Beatitudes (*Matthew 5:3-6*)

- Be-Attitudes = How to live as God's righteous people
 - beatus* - Latin for blessed
 - makarios* - Greek for god-like joy
- How did Jesus begin by pointing out that proud self-righteousness won't lead to God's kingdom?
Matthew 5:3 = The poor in spirit will receive the kingdom – rely entirely on God's righteousness
- What did Jesus offer to those upset by their sinfulness separating them from God's righteousness?
Matthew 5:4-5 (Isaiah 40:1-2) = They will be comforted by God's forgiveness
- What did Jesus promise to those who looked to God for His righteousness?
Matthew 5:6 (Psalm 42:1-2) = They will be given His full righteousness

Outward Signs of Righteousness (*Matthew 5:7-16*)

- How does inner righteousness impact outward actions?
Matthew 12:33-35 = Righteous living flows from a righteous heart, likewise for unrighteousness
- If true righteousness flows from within, then how does it look on the outside?
Matthew 5:7-9 = The righteous in God display His mercy, purity and peace to others
- Isn't it risky to be this way? Won't others view this as weakness and take advantage of us?
Matthew 5:10-12 = Yes, but we will be rewarded for our faithfulness through persecution
- Should keep our righteousness hidden within so it won't lead to persecution?
Matthew 5:13-16 = No, it is important to let others see God's righteousness working through us
- Notes: Salt preserves (keeps from going bad) and enhances flavor
Most salt was from evaporated Dead Sea water and contained many impurities
The salt would leach out before the impurities, leaving a useless residue

Righteousness With or Without the Law (*Matthew 5:17-18*)

- Was Jesus saying that the Old Testament teachings were wrong and that He was correcting them?
Matthew 5:17 = No, He didn't come to abolish them but to fulfill them
- How did Jesus fulfill the Law and the Prophets?
Hebrews 4:14-15 = He perfectly obeyed God's will and points us to the Father
- How does Jesus' perfection and relationship with the Father help us live in God's righteousness?
2 Corinthians 5:21 = He traded His obedience and righteousness for our sin
- Since Jesus has fulfilled God's Law for us, can we now ignore the Law?
Matthew 5:18-19 (Romans 6:15-23) = No, the Law still shows us how to live as God's people
- Why should we want to learn and follow God's Law if Jesus has fulfilled it for us?
Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23 = As we live in God's righteousness, we naturally want to do His will

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Living in God's Righteousness (*Matthew 5:20-48*)

In order to follow God's Law as His people, should we look to guidance from those who interpret it?

Matthew 5:20 = No, they can have a poor and wrong understanding of God's Law

The teachers and Pharisees worked to address every angle of the law. How could they be so wrong?

Matthew 23:25-28 = They focus on outward appearances, not on the inside where it counts

What example did Jesus give to make this point?

Matthew 5:21-22 = Anger or hatred is murder in the heart

How should we respond when we feel anger or hatred toward someone?

Matthew 5:23-26 = Get rid of it and be reconciled with them

What example did Jesus give next to show the difference between inward and outward righteousness?

Matthew 5:27-28 = Lust is adultery in the heart

How does Jesus respond to our excuse that it is only natural and we can't help it?

Matthew 5:29-30 = Get control of your natural self, don't excuse sins of the heart

What example did Jesus give to point out that common practices do not necessarily fit with God's will?

Matthew 5:31-32 = Any divorce is the result of sin (by one party or both)

What other example did He use to make this point? = Swore by anything other than God's name

Matthew 5:33-37 (Isaiah 66:1; Deut 23:21-23; Ecc 5:5) = Oaths only needed for the untruthful

If we live in God's righteousness, how should we respond to those who don't?

Matthew 5:38-42 = Let them do as they please, don't seek revenge

So, should we quietly accept abuse and deal with it internally?

Matthew 5:43-47 = No, that could lead to murder in the heart, we should respond with love

How does Jesus summarize the ideal that should guide our actions as we live in righteousness?

Matthew 5:48 = Strive to be god-like – perfect

Acts of Righteousness (*Matthew 6:1-18*)

What is a risk we should be aware of when living in God's righteousness?

Matthew 6:1 = Don't do acts of righteousness for the sake of praise by others

Didn't we read that Jesus told us in this sermon to do acts of righteousness before others?

Matthew 5:16 = Yes

So, why did He change his mind?

Matthew 6:5 = He didn't; the difference is whether it is for praise to God or self

We will cover these verses in more detail next week

Treasures in Heaven (*Matthew 6:19-34*)

How do we keep from having to worry about whether we do something to praise God or ourselves?

Matthew 6:19-21 = Focus on God's kingdom rather than this earthly kingdom

How do we keep our focus on God's kingdom?

Matthew 6:22-23 (Hebrews 12:2) = Keep our eyes focused on Jesus

Why is it important to keep focused on Jesus and God's kingdom?

Matthew 6:24 = We will serve the master we focus on

But don't we need to pay attention to the needs of this life?

Matthew 6:25-27 (25-34) = No, God will provide as we trust in Him

What key verse did Jesus give us to help us understand how this works?

Matthew 6:33 = Seek His kingdom and righteousness and God will take care of the rest

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I'm Just Trying to be Helpful (*Matthew 7:1-6*)

Should we watch how others act so we can help them if they aren't displaying God's righteousness?

Matthew 7:1-2 = Let God watch them, you're judged by the same standards you use for others

But, what if I notice something that needs attention?

Matthew 7:3-5 = Be sure you have your own house in order first

So should we just let our brother Christians keep sinning?

Galatians 6:1 (*Matthew 18:15-18*) = No, we should carefully guide him to repentance

Should we try to get non-Christians to live in God's righteousness as Jesus described in Matthew 5?

Matthew 7:6 = They won't understand until they see their sin in the Law and repent

God's Gifts (*Matthew 7:7-12*)

What does God promise to us as we live in His righteousness?

Matthew 7:7-8 = He will give us whatever we ask for

Why would God do this? = Living in His righteousness we ask in His will

Matthew 7:9-11 = Because He loves us and wants to give us good gifts

How should we respond to this?

Matthew 7:12 = Treat others as you would have them treat you – a key theme of God's Word

Warnings (*Matthew 7:13-29*)

Is it easy to live in God's righteousness?

Matthew 7:13-14 = No, the road is narrow with many hazards and distractions

What is one especially dangerous distraction along the road? = False prophets

Matthew 7:15-20 = Satan will deceive us to follow him thinking we are following God

How do we recognize these false prophets? Is it okay to listen to anyone who says Jesus is Lord?

Matthew 7:21-23 = No, Satan can say anything he wants when trying to deceive us

How can we be sure that we aren't deceived?

Matthew 7:24-25 = Keep secure on the solid foundation of faith

What is the option to this?

Matthew 7:26-27 = Without a strong foundation of faith in Christ, Satan's attack will succeed

How did the disciples and crowds feel about Jesus' sermon?

Matthew 7:28-29 (28:18) = They were amazed at the authority with which He spoke

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I been humbled by recognizing my spiritual poorness, by mourning my sinfulness or by meekly realizing my position before God?
(*Matthew 5:3-5; Psalm 8; Romans 8:5-17; Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 2:13; Revelation 3:1*)
2. How has my hunger and thirst for God's righteousness led me to grow in mercy, purity and peace?
(*Matthew 5:6-9; Hosea 6:6; Romans 1:17; 3:22-24; 14:17-19; Philippians 4:7; Jude 2*)
3. What does it mean for me to be the salt of the earth or the light of the world? How do I fulfill my calling to be salt and light? (*Matthew 5:13-16; Isaiah 60:1-3; Mark 9:50; John 3:19-21; 8:12; Ephesians 5:8-16; Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11*)
4. What do I treasure most in life?
(*Matthew 6:19-24; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 12:13-21; 16:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:17-19*)
5. What causes me to worry?
(*Matthew 6:25-34; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 10:38-42; John 14:1, 27; Philippians 4:6*)